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New York

President:	Mr. Denisov	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Germany	Mr. Trautwein
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Dumitru
	Spain	Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Thomson
	United States of America	Mrs. Patterson

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2004/634)

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04-46890 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2004/634)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Canada, Iceland, Japan, the Netherlands and Uzbekistan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Arnault to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2004/634).

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Arnault (*spoke in French*): As the first speaker at today's meeting, I should like to express to you, Mr. President, our condolences for the tragic air accident that occurred yesterday and to request that you convey our expressions of support and solidarity to the families of the victims.

(*spoke in English*)

Thank you, Mr. President, for this new opportunity to appear before the Council and also for having agreed to postpone this presentation from last week until today in order to accommodate the work of the Mission.

Members of the Council have already seen the quarterly report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/634), which covers the period from mid-March until the end of July. With your permission, Mr. President, I will therefore refrain from reiterating what is already contained in it and focus on providing the Council with an update on the main issues on the Bonn agenda.

Throughout most of the country, voter registration closed on 15 August. In some districts of the south and the south-east, where registration started late owing to insecurity, registration was extended for another five days and came to an end on 20 August. Although final figures will take some time to compile, the broad picture is already available: 10.5 million people registered, more than 41 per cent of them women. Some 230,000 nomads were registered by dedicated registration teams. Overall, that is a good result: this comprehensive nationwide exercise now enables the electoral authorities and the security forces to make appropriate preparations for the 9 October election. It will make it possible for the elected leadership to claim representation of the Afghan nation as a whole. It has also served as a tool for an unprecedented level of popular mobilization around the political process, much higher than the two prior exercises held earlier: namely, the Emergency Loya Jirga and the Constitutional Loya Jirga. Elections held in the wake of a prolonged conflict are meant to create political legitimacy for the post-war order. The presidential election in Afghanistan now has the potential to do just that.

The picture is not entirely satisfactory, however. Although many of the cases of imbalance that existed a month ago between provinces have been corrected, it has proved very difficult to redress the situation in the areas of the south most affected by insecurity. In those areas, general insecurity, threats and attacks by extremist elements against electoral personnel and against the people themselves have caused registration sites to open late or for shorter periods of time. Most affected has been the province of Zabul, where registration barely exceeds 50 per cent of the target. In addition, although even in very conservative areas of the country the registration of women has reached the national average of some 40 per cent, we believe that insecurity has contributed to the very low registration of women in the south — approximately 19 per cent.

Some concerns have been expressed — most recently by several presidential candidates — about the fairness of registration. Among the allegations were charges that political considerations had shaped the choice of registration sites or the date of closing. Although there were obviously shortcomings to this process, we are fully satisfied that political bias was not one of them. Multiple registration, on the other hand, has probably been a factor, but it is very difficult to measure its scale, and, in any case, it will have no impact on polling.

At the conclusion of this nine-month registration campaign, it is fitting to pay tribute to the 12 electoral workers who were killed and the more than 30 who were wounded in attacks by extremists and to the 14,000 Afghan staff who made this success possible. Credit also goes to the Afghan security forces, to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and to the coalition, which — along with United Nations personnel — have played an essential role in this unprecedented endeavour.

Preparations for the election are now under way. The Joint Electoral Management Body is finalizing regulations applicable to the electoral campaign, which will start on 7 September. These cover campaign financing, electoral activities and public order, access to the media and the misuse of government resources for political purposes. Logistical preparations for the election are also under way: approximately 5,000 polling centres have been identified, in which 25,000 polling sites will be located. The recruitment of the 120,000 Afghan staff involved in the election has begun. Ballot boxes and other non-sensitive materials are arriving in the country and are in the process of distribution to the 34 provincial centres. Ballot papers will arrive in Kabul on 15 September and will similarly be shipped to provincial centres during the second half of September.

Of course, security is a major consideration. The overall security plan for the pre-polling phase, for election day and for post-election processes has been finalized. The concept is essentially identical to that developed during registration: polling-site security will be the responsibility primarily of the Ministry of Interior, who by polling day will have 20,000 police trained in the training centres supported by the United States and Germany.

The average number of police will be approximately six per site, and therefore additional security personnel will have to be recruited locally, in addition to trained police. The security of areas around the polling sites will be provided by the military: personnel from the Afghan National Army, from ISAF and from the coalition. The coalition now has approximately 18,000 troops in Afghanistan; ISAF has 7,300, which will rise to approximately 8,300 when the Spanish and Italian battalions are in theatre. They should be operational by the end of September. Cooperation between security actors and the electoral authority has been increasingly smooth as voter registration has progressed, and that legacy will be a very significant asset in dealing with the much more difficult challenge of providing security for the election.

That leads me to the nature of the challenges that we anticipate over the next six weeks. Difficult situations can be expected throughout the country. In recent weeks, factional rivalries have led to the temporary closure of registration sites in several provinces, including most recently in Badghis and Ghor, in connection with factional violence there. However, although factional violence has occasionally affected registration, it has never targeted it as such. That has been the work of groups such as the Taliban and Hezbi-i-Islami/Hekmatyar, which have vowed publicly to derail the process and have been responsible for the brunt of the attacks directed against voter registration. The latest attack — involving six bombs going off in quick succession inside and outside a registration compound in the province of Farah — took place on 19 August, killing two policemen and injuring seven.

Those forces have not been able to derail the process and have, in particular, failed spectacularly to undermine popular participation in registration in the country's east and south-east. However, as described earlier, their impact on the south has been more tangible and has deprived part of the population there of the possibility of participating in the election. What is more worrying, domestic and international security agencies concur that there are clear indications that the Taliban and similar groups are now preparing to escalate their attacks against the last stage of the election.

We are reasonably confident that these groups will not be able to undermine the electoral process at the national level. But we are concerned that violence could cause part of the population to stay away from polling sites in the south and elsewhere. That threat is compounded by the fact that security forces — both domestic and international — will be stretched thin to protect all 5,000 sites across the country.

Action is therefore necessary against those who plan and organize these attacks. In this respect, we welcome the timely meeting held on Monday and Tuesday between President Musharraf and President Karzai, and we hope that enhanced cooperation between the two countries and the international forces will prevent further violence against the elections. This is an urgent matter, as the electoral campaign will start in less than two weeks and thousands of electoral staff will be involved in the preparation of polling day between now and 9 October. The presidential election can make a major contribution to the stability of Afghanistan and the consolidation of its fragile state. Its protection deserves, in our view, the highest priority, as does the protection of the lives of the electoral workers who are making it possible.

Let me take this opportunity to refer briefly to the security of United Nations staff. A recent joint mission by the Office of the Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has identified a few measures that will improve the security of United Nations staff in Afghanistan in the upcoming period. They include additional trained Afghan personnel for the protection of United Nations premises and a better capacity for security information and analysis. The cost of these measures is modest and I hope they can be implemented as quickly as possible.

Preparation for registration and voting in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan has, fortunately, made substantial progress since the Secretary-General's quarterly report to the Security Council (S/2004/634). Following the signing of memoranda of understanding between both Governments, as well as between the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the implementing partner, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has begun to operate in both countries.

Because of the very compressed time frame, registration in Pakistan will be less than comprehensive but will still be carried out on a scale that, we believe, is acceptable. The process will start on 1 October. It will include three days of registration, two days of exhibition and challenges of the voters' list and three days for the retraining of staff. Polling day will take place, as in the rest of Afghanistan, on 9 October. Depending on the situation on the ground, registration or exhibition could be extended by one additional day. Over 1,000 registration and polling stations will be deployed in 300 locations in the refugee camps, in the north-west frontier province and Baluchistan and among urban concentrations of refugees in Peshawar and Quetta. The campaign of civic education aimed at the refugee population in Pakistan will start on 1 September. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Pakistan for its cooperation in implementing this complex exercise.

In Iran, where the registration of refugees was completed two years ago under the auspices of the Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, polling will take place in approximately 1,000 polling stations in 250 locations, and the civic education campaign will start during the first week of September.

Out of the initial list of 23 applicants, 18 presidential candidates have passed the test of eligibility. The process of vetting was thorough and involved public exhibition of the list of presidential hopefuls and vetting of the applications by the Ministries of Interior, Defence and Finance, as well as the Supreme Court. Several embassies cooperated in checking whether candidates held double nationality, grounds for ineligibility under the Afghan constitution. Three candidates were alleged to maintain relationships with militias. They agreed to the Joint Electoral Management Body's proposal to have professional

officers of the Afghan National Army assigned to take command of their units.

The political affiliation of the candidates is quite diverse, with two being related to the royalist movement, two having achieved some prominence during the communist period, five belonging to jihadi parties and nine being broadly described as democrats. The only female presidential candidate, Masuda Jalal, already competed with President Karzai at the Emergency Loya Jirga two years ago, where she arrived in second place. Three more women are competing in the election as candidates for vice-president. The diversity of political backgrounds of the various candidates is, in itself, quite encouraging, as it shows that, at the national level at least, a meaningful political competition is seen as possible.

Political diversity is supplemented by ethnic diversity. As an unintended consequence of the constitutional provision that each presidential candidate must run on a ticket with his or her two vice-presidents, candidates have been able to nominate vice-presidential candidates outside their own ethnic group. This is certainly a welcome pattern. As reported to the Security Council earlier this year, the Constitutional Loya Jirga saw a rise in ethnic distrust and hostility and generated at the time fear that the electoral competition would further strengthen the politics of ethnicity. So far, the politics of multi-ethnicity has prevailed. In recent days, however, the tone of the political debate has become increasingly acrimonious, and we will have to watch closely how the electoral campaign unfolds.

During the period of electoral campaigning between 7 September and 8 October, the nationwide verification of political rights, undertaken jointly by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and UNAMA, will continue. It will ascertain whether the rights and obligations of candidates are observed and will recommend corrective action if need be.

Let me now say a few words about developments in other areas that are important to the State-building process in Afghanistan and should, hopefully, provide the next Government with better means to expand its authority.

Council members know how critical the issue of counter-narcotics has become as a result of the dramatic expansion of poppy cultivation this year. In his quarterly report (S/2004/634), the Secretary-General reported on the weak outcome of the eradication effort. The eradication campaign is now over, but interdiction continues. A successful raid by the Afghan Special Narcotics Force in early August in Helmand destroyed processing equipment and over two tons of drugs. This is an indication of the increasing capability of this force, which has destroyed, in the past eight months, over 30 tons of illegal drugs. The counter-narcotics police, for their part, continue to seize drugs and arrest suspects. They lack, however, the support of a fully functioning criminal justice system to prosecute drug cases fairly and efficiently. However, a project implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime provides for the establishment of a specialized channel of the judicial system to handle such cases more effectively with specially trained prosecutors, judges and appropriate prison facilities. By the end of this year, we expect that the tools for a more effective law enforcement in the area of counter-narcotics should be in place.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and the cantonment of heavy weapons remain slow, but we continue to believe that the targets of Berlin with regard to DDR can be achieved by the time of the election. Thirteen thousand soldiers have been demobilized and the demobilization of another 10,000 would get us very close to the 60 per cent target. Indeed, it appears more and more probable that the actual number of militias is not the official 100,000 but closer to 40,000 or 50,000.

In addition, in the past month, four corps commanders, in Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Kunduz, have been reassigned to civilian functions. Two of them are now chiefs of police, one is a provincial governor and the fourth one is a deputy interior minister. This gives the Ministry of Defence the opportunity to transfer command and control of these corps to professional officers, preferably trained officers of the Afghan National Army. Final discussions on these appointments are currently under way. Good decisions in this regard will go a long way towards reassuring the population that militias will not be a factor in the upcoming elections. They will also facilitate the conclusion of the DDR process and the further expansion of the Afghan National Army.

Massive popular participation in voter registration has shown how much is riding on the upcoming election. We think that an election that meets these expectations is now within reach. We need an

additional effort with regard to the security of voters and electoral staff, and we need to continue to work hard on the political environment in order to ensure that it is as conducive as possible to a free and fair exercise. The Government, the contending candidates and the forces they represent, and the international community have a share of responsibility in it. We trust that we will all live up to it.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Arnault for his comprehensive briefing.

Ms. Patterson (United States of America): We would like to join Mr. Arnault in conveying our condolences to you, Mr. President, on the tragic loss of life in the unusual double airplane crash in your country.

Let me begin by thanking Mr. Arnault for his very informative briefing. My delegation is very happy to see him here in New York. We thank him for his perseverance and hard work on the elections and on other vitally endeavours in Afghanistan.

The election scheduled for 9 October is an important milestone in Afghanistan's path towards democracy. We commend the courage of the over 10 million Afghans who have decided to register to vote despite the threats of intimidation and violence. We welcome the over 4 million women who have chosen to take part in the political process. It is inspiring to see the determination of the Afghan people to make these elections succeed. There is no better tribute to the democratic process.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) needs the international community to ensure the success of that election. First, it is imperative that UNAMA have sufficient resources to carry out the election. UNAMA has reported that it is facing a budget shortfall, caused by pledged funds that have not yet been disbursed. That gap must be closed to allow the election to be conducted in an effective and timely manner. Existing pledges will cover the costs of in-country voting, but the shortfall must be closed to allow the refugees in Pakistan and Iran to vote as well.

In that regard, it is important that Pakistan and Iran move forward in tandem on out-of-country registration and voting, so that the over 600,000 Afghans in Pakistan and the over 800,000 Afghans in Iran can take part in the election process. The fullest possible participation in the election by Afghan refugees will further the legitimacy of the elections and solidify the refugees' ties to their native country. The United States has already pledged and disbursed $24.7 million to help fund the election. We ask other States to work with us to identify and to pledge additional funds to meet the funding shortfall and to ensure success in this historic election.

Secondly, UNAMA staff must be protected so that they can carry out their mandate. We share Mr. Arnault's concern as to the impact of the recent attacks against election workers. Violence targeting registration sites and United Nations convoys over the past three weeks has underscored the dangers faced by election staff. It is imperative that we do all we can to counter that violence and protect the election process.

In June, NATO leaders agreed to provide enhanced security to Afghan authorities for the election. The deployment of additional forces has already begun. By September, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will assume the leadership of five provincial reconstruction teams in the north and north-east of Afghanistan. ISAF is working with coalition forces and Afghan authorities to complete an election security plan and to coordinate the implementation of a security framework.

Along with many other nations, the United States has worked with the people of Afghanistan for the past two years to rebuild their war-torn country. Together with ISAF, UNAMA and many non-governmental organizations, we have provided infrastructure, health care and education to a generation of Afghans that has known only war. The Afghan people have responded, enacting a strong, democratic constitution. The October election will mark the end of a transition period and the beginning of a new, democratic future.

Mr. Trautwein (Germany): Let me express my delegation's shock at the crashes involving two civilian passenger aircraft yesterday in southern Russia. The German Government would like to convey its deepest condolences to the relatives of the victims.

My delegation is very grateful for the report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/634) and for the extensive and comprehensive briefing made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault.

Let me begin by saying that Germany aligns itself with the statement that the Ambassador of the Netherlands will make on behalf of the European Union.

Germany fully concurs with the findings of the report and its concluding observations, as well as with the assessment presented this morning by Mr. Arnault.

Voter registration, and in particular the high percentage of women participating, has been a great success and has exceeded our most optimistic expectations. That is a clear sign that the Afghan people are able and willing to determine their own destiny. The presidential election is a decisive step along the road of democratization and reconstruction, as laid out in the Bonn process. We wish to thank the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its extraordinary effort in assisting the Afghan Government in that endeavour.

The Afghan Government and the international community must now undertake the necessary measures to ensure that the presidential election is conducted successfully. We welcome the fact that observer missions from the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as from the Asia Foundation and the National Democratic Institute, will be present. NATO is also preparing to further assist the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in providing the necessary security for the election.

Germany is concerned about the deteriorating security situation, which was mentioned by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. That situation is also affecting areas that had heretofore been stable. We share the assessment that security is threatened from three sides, namely, by terrorist forces such as the Taliban and Al Qaeda, by factional fighting between hostile armed groups and by criminal activities, particularly those associated with drugs. It will therefore be of the utmost importance to continue to reform the security sector by disarming militias and further establishing a functioning judicial system and national army and police forces. Germany will continue its support for building up national Afghan police forces.

The additional time gained due to the postponement of the parliamentary election should be used to improve the security situation. We hope that the Afghan Government and the international community will accelerate the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in all provinces, in order to guarantee free and fair elections nation-wide and to strengthen the authority of the federal Government.

Germany is also alarmed by the increased cultivation of drug crops. Last year Afghanistan had the second largest opium harvest ever. The narco-economy endangers economic reconstruction and the establishment of functioning State structures. We therefore welcome the measures taken by the Afghan Government and others in combating this illicit economy.

The Secretary-General has rightly asked the international community to strengthen the effort to consolidate peace and stability. Afghanistan will continue to need external help in order to face the challenges to security. In that context, I would like to point to the establishment of a second German provincial reconstruction team Faizabad, in Badakhshan. An advance team is already on the ground, and soon a first troop contingent will be deployed. Germany remains the largest national provider of armed forces for ISAF in Kabul. It also provides troops for the Eurocorps headquarters, which took over the leadership of ISAF in August this year. Finally, German troops are part of the French-German brigade within the Kabul multinational brigade.

Mr. President, Germany welcomes the verification of the political rights campaign and the report by UNAMA and the independent Afghan Commissioner for Human Rights. This is an important mechanism to ensure that the Afghan people can enjoy their liberties, guaranteed in the constitution, and that they can participate in the political decision-making process, especially in the provinces.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to join those who have conveyed condolences to you upon the unfortunate air accident in your country yesterday. We welcome the valuable information on Afghanistan provided by Mr. Jean Arnault, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We share his concern about the deteriorating security situation in the country: attacks against international humanitarian personnel, United Nations agencies, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghan provisional government are grave and deplorable. We regret, for example, that Médecins sans frontières has

been obliged to close down its operations in this country, after having worked there for 24 years, as a result of attacks which have led to the death of five of its workers. Another focus of destabilization has been an increase in violent clashes among factions, particularly those that we have heard of recently in Herat, Badghis and in the district of Shinda, among others.

The security situation has a direct impact on many aspects of the political process and the very stability of the transitional Government, as well as on economic growth and development. This is why NATO's contribution is so important as have been Operation Enduring Freedom, the provincial reconstruction teams and the support to reform the security sector. Nevertheless, the Council should study additional alternatives to deal with these tremendous challenges.

Members of the monitoring team from the Security Council's Sanctions Committee on Al Qaeda and the Taliban that I am chairing made a recent visit to Afghanistan where a series of meetings were held with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Security Council, the Board on National Security, as well as with Mr. Arnault and with personnel from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Many of the points made in the report of the Secretary-General were observed by our panel of experts as well. In particular, I should like to emphasize that, as observed in the report, the Taliban continues to constitute a real threat to the reconstruction and stability of the country, and containing this organization is crucial. I recommend that you read the initial report prepared by our team which will be distributed today as an official document.

With regard to the holding of national presidential elections we would like to emphasize the progress that has been made. Recently, information has been provided regarding the effort entailed in this attempt and we never could have imagined even just a few months ago that more than 10 million voters would have been registered in which women represent 41 per cent. We praise the difficult work achieved by the hundreds of electoral workers that are committed to support this important process in reconstructing the country. We also find it very painful to learn about the attacks against such workers.

Despite the progress that has been made in the electoral process which fills us with hope that we will continue to make headway in implementing the Bonn Agreement, we nevertheless must stress how concerned we are that it became possible to assure the necessary security conditions to ensure free and just elections, in view of the series of threats that have been issued by the Taliban. We agree with what was said in the report that it is indispensable for there to be a clear-cut increase in international assistance in the security field.

Among the challenges that have been mentioned by previous speakers and which still persist are delays in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and the troubling increase in the elicit cultivation of poppies and of drug trafficking in general. We know that this has made it possible to finance many of the groups and factions that are responsible for such attacks and raids that have occurred in recent days and months.

We would like to emphasize the courage, the effort and the enthusiasm to press ahead in the reconstruction of the State, as demonstrated by the Afghan people, as well as by the Government of President Karzai, despite all the difficulties. Finally, we would like to praise the excellent and devoted work carried out by Mr. Jean Arnault and his team in UNAMA and we wish them great success in their undertaking.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): At the outset we would like to express our regrets for the air accidents yesterday in the Russian Federation. Please convey to your Government and to the relatives of the victims the condolences of the Angolan delegation.

We thank you, Sir, for convening this public meeting to consider the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. We also thank Mr. Jean Arnault, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his update of the report with the latest developments in the electoral process in Afghanistan.

We praise his efforts and those of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in the building of a nation free from scourges of extremist violence, factionalism and a narcotics industry. We have to acknowledge our great concern over the ongoing situation in Afghanistan. The report presents a mixed picture, with important achievements

in a number of areas, as well as serious problems against a background of a "tenuous security situation that threatens the gains of the Bonn process" (*S/2004/634, summary*).

The report states a number of instances, particularly in the security sector, which are cause of great concern. The deteriorating security situation in areas of the country previously secured should be addressed resolutely as the report states. NATO's recent decision to deploy extra troops is a clear and welcome response to this challenge which represents the international community's renewed willingness for a firmer commitment to Afghanistan.

As portrayed in the report, it is praiseworthy to note the significant progress in reforms carried through in the area of public administration, fiscal management and in economic and social development. Serious domestic political commitment and coordinated international support have yielded impressive results. The other side of the coin is quite different and worrisome indeed. The report portrays slow progress in the development of the Afghan National Army, with a little of over 10 per cent of the targets met, which shows the need for a long-term sustained presence of international security forces in the country.

It portrays insufficient progress in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), with some 20 per cent of the target having been attained; this evidences the need to put an end to the military factions, which are the main factors standing in the way of a comprehensive programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

The report also mentions the acute need for Afghanistan to have a trained and properly equipped national police force. The force at present stands at less than 50 per cent of the target strength, which highlights the need to accelerate international support for the Afghan police.

The report further notes slow progress in justice-sector reform; a human rights situation which is a continuing source of serious concern; forced land evictions and illegal occupation of land; and the threat of Afghanistan becoming a narco-State in the "worst-case scenario", as the report puts it (*S/2004/634, para. 40*), with a dramatic upsurge in narcotics cultivation, processing and trafficking. All of this requires a very determined fight against entrenched informal actors, whose existence is a threat and an obstacle to the full exercise of sovereignty by the Afghan State.

In the coming months, Afghanistan will face decisive challenges. It is our belief that, if these are overcome successfully, the whole process of nation-building will be energized. The electoral process, which will take place after October, might have an enormous political and psychological impact on Afghan life and might make a decisive contribution to accelerating and correcting the course of the choices taken by the Afghan authorities and by the international community. It is my delegation's view that the international community, in stepping up its efforts in this most important endeavour, should concentrate all available resources in order to guarantee an orderly, fair and just electoral process; this would make a decisive contribution to the devolution of sovereignty to the Afghan people and to the strengthening of that people's fundamental rights and freedoms.

The voter registration programme has already scored impressive success. Above all, the great participation of women is a beacon of hope, showing a will for the deliverance of the most oppressed citizens of Afghanistan. We are aware that the security situation could negatively affect the electoral process. The forces of reaction to the positive things that have taken place in Afghanistan will most probably step up their efforts to disrupt the process and try to prevent the Afghan people from determining its future in freedom and in peace.

We consider that the recent response of NATO to the strenuous and repeated appeals by the Secretary-General for more international forces in Afghanistan and the decision to deploy extra troops to support the upcoming elections are welcome developments that reflect an increasingly good understanding by the international community of what is at stake in Afghanistan. With the success of the future ballot ensured, decisive action will be taken, with far-reaching consequences for the future of the Afghan people.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I take this opportunity to express to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation the Brazilian Government's sorrow at the tragic deaths that were a consequence of last night's aerial disasters. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. My delegation is grateful to Mr. Jean Arnault, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2004/634), which covers the period since 19 March.

The report of the Secretary-General describes the state of affairs in Afghanistan in all its complexity. Its paragraphs 53 and 54 may well amount to a synthesis of the present situation: on the one hand, the Government is making commendable progress in areas such as public administration, fiscal management and aspects of private sector and economic and social development; on the other, there is timid advance in areas such as the rule of law, land management, disarmament and counter-narcotics. The report makes it very clear that difficulties arise whenever

> "the reform process comes up against entrenched informal actors and networks whose interests are abetted by a weak State that is unable to apply force or to impose formal rules throughout the country". (*S/2004/634, para. 54*)

Success ultimately depends on promoting the increased legitimacy of the Government — hence the core importance of the electoral process — and on the effectiveness of its organs and institutions, including the police, the courts and the armed forces. It is the responsibility of both the Afghans themselves and the international community, working together, to create the conditions for a better future.

Preparation for elections has made sizeable progress, even against the unfavourable backdrop of violence and terrorism. The registration of voters, which closed last Friday, totalled more than 10 million Afghans, and the significant proportion of women among them is indeed a very positive, albeit uneven, development. Also, the accreditation of 18 candidates for the presidential elections and the registration of 30 political parties seem to reflect the diversity of the Afghan people and their interest and mobilization regarding the political process.

The completion of a truly representative vote will depend, however, on the provision of adequate security for the 5,000 polling sites operating across the country; this has been mentioned by other speakers. We concur with the Secretary-General that a net increase in international security assistance is therefore indispensable in time to protect the electoral campaign in early September and beyond the holding of the parliamentary election.

It is no secret that the already fragile security situation has been deteriorating in recent months. Terrorist attacks in the whole territory against targets of the Government, the Afghan army and the international presence have become commonplace and risk undermining the peace effort. An eloquent reminder of how the lack of security is compromising the viability of humanitarian assistance was given last month when the organization Médecins sans Frontières felt compelled to interrupt its humanitarian activities in the country. Further deployment of troops by NATO, following the recent summit in Istanbul, is taking place, as it seems that an expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) presence in Afghanistan is needed.

Yet we note with satisfaction the gradual strengthening of the Afghan National Army — with all the limitations that are pointed out in the report — and the commitment of the international community to increase its support for the reconstruction of the Afghan National Police. National capacity-building in the enforcement of the rule of law is a key factor for long-term stability and should be carried out in parallel with the actions taken by the international community.

A thorough process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) is also required for any improvement in the security field, and for tackling the power of warlords and terrorists determined to sabotage the peace process. The report shows, however, that DDR is facing considerable challenges and remains behind schedule. The containment of rising activities by militias throughout the country depends on some vigorous progress in this area.

Drug trafficking has become a thriving and lucrative activity that finances the acquisition of illegal weapons and the formation of militias, with all kinds of destabilizing consequences. The alarming drug situation requires further action. Eradication initiatives have had very limited success, and drug trafficking still accounts for more than half of the gross domestic product. More effective strategies to combat drugs must be urgently devised and pursued. The recent issuance by the Council of Ulemas of a religious decree condemning narcotics and other related activities can

be instrumental in discouraging the cultivation of opium poppy. Also, we welcomed the follow-up on the implementation of the Declaration on Counter-Narcotics within the Framework of the Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations.

Unfortunately, there are disquieting reports that systematic human rights violations continue to take place. The situation of women has shown little progress. We reaffirm our conviction that the programmes of the Independent Human Rights Commission of Afghanistan are key in dealing with systematic human rights violations that still occur in the country and that such programmes must be reinforced and supported by local and international authorities.

Persisting problems in the security area as well as in the promotion of human rights affect the commendable role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in repatriating hundreds of thousands of Afghans that are still internally displaced or who are taking refuge in neighbouring countries. That was the case last week, when some 13,000 Afghans were prevented from returning home due to clashes in the western part of the country.

Promoting security and stability remains a vital challenge. The new rise of violence, factionalism and the narcotics industry expose the frailty of the achievements reached since the Bonn Conference. Those achievements risk being undermined if effective responses are not provided. The current state of affairs, being so complex, demands the energetic engagement not only of the Afghans themselves but also of the international community, which must live up to the many commitments it made in the past. The upcoming elections certainly constitute a crucial test on the road towards democracy and peace in Afghanistan.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, Sir, I join preceding speakers in expressing our deep condolences in connection with the double aviation tragedy that occurred in your country yesterday. Please convey our condolences to the Russian Government and the families of the victims.

I express our thanks to Special Representative Mr. Arnault for the comprehensive briefing he has just given the Council in presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/634) and for his work at the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

As the representative of the Netherlands will make a statement on behalf of the European Union, with which Spain fully associates itself, I shall confine myself to making some brief observations.

Despite numerous obstacles, the peace process in Afghanistan continues to advance. Proof of that is the presidential election to be held on 9 October, which will be followed by legislative elections in April 2005, and the success being achieved in the process of voter registration of both men and women. This demonstrates the Afghan people's determination to decide its own destiny.

The elections must constitute a fundamental milestone in the consolidation of democracy, stability and the future prosperity of Afghanistan. However, it has to be acknowledged that the increase in terrorist, criminal and factional violence in recent months, with numerous attacks on humanitarian personnel and attacks aimed at undermining the progress of the electoral process, makes it even more urgent to boost efforts to establish basic conditions of security, in conformity with the commitments of the Bonn Agreement, ratified at the Berlin Conference on Afghanistan.

The terrorist violence of Al Qaeda and Taliban elements, the violence caused by warlords and armed militias and their connections with the drug traffic continue to be the principal threats to the progress made in the pacification, stabilization and reconstruction of the country. Thus, as the Secretary-General notes in his report, international security assistance is of vital importance to Afghanistan.

In that context, and in reply to the request made by the Secretary-General and President Karzai and the appeal to troop-contributing countries contained in resolution 1536 (2004), the Government of Spain, with the support of Parliament and in the framework of the agreements reached in the recent NATO summit, authorized last month an increase of up to 540 troops in the Spanish contingent of the International Security Assistance Force in order to provide a field hospital, complemented by means of transport, four helicopters and two transport airplanes and one support and protection unit. In addition, as part of that operation, the Spanish Government authorized the temporary deployment of an infantry battalion with a maximum of

500 additional troops to support the electoral process in Afghanistan. I have the honour to inform the Council that the new deployment of Spanish forces began on 17 August and that those forces will be fully operational in the course of September, in time to contribute to the security and good conduct of the presidential election of 9 October.

Despite the great importance of the electoral process, it should not lead us to forget the urgent need to make progress in areas where progress so far has been too slow. Specifically, I am referring to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, the fight against drug trafficking, land management, and the development of the rule of law in all its aspects. In the area of fundamental rights, including the improvement of the situation of women, where much remains to be done, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission is doing a valuable job, which we should all acknowledge and support.

In short, all those elements I have mentioned — security, elections, disarmament, the return of refugees, the rule of law, the fight against drugs and human rights issues — all those elements are interrelated. For that reason, it is urgent to make progress on all those fronts in a simultaneous, harmonious and integrated manner. Only that way will the reform and reconstruction of the country reach a satisfactory conclusion for the good of the Afghan people and the entire region.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): We join colleagues in extending our deepest condolences to you, Sir, your Government and the families of the victims of the two aeroplane crashes that occurred in southern Russia.

We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this public meeting at this crucial juncture of the peace process in Afghanistan. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for the very informative update he has given the Council on the preparations to be undertaken to ensure full, free, fair and credible elections in Afghanistan.

The Afghan people have shown to the world that they are ready and determined to put their destiny in their own hands. That is evidenced by the more than 10 million Afghans who have registered, 4 million of whom are women. The number of candidates for president — 18 — who want to govern a difficult country like Afghanistan is another manifestation of that determination. As the Secretary-General said, through voter registration, the people of Afghanistan are showing that they are prepared to seize the opportunity offered by the Bonn process to build a new country and a new State, and to take risks in the process. We have also noted that overseas voting has been extended to the Afghans in Iran and in Pakistan. It would be interesting to observe the dynamics of that aspect, as it may well affect the results of the elections. One can hazard a guess that the elections in those locations will be more trouble-free, fair and credible.

We note the positive developments and the preparations being undertaken for the electoral process. However, like other delegations, we find it disturbing that, although there are only about five weeks left before the presidential elections, the security situation in the country has deteriorated significantly. The security challenges to be addressed include violent incidents such as those in recent weeks, even in areas in northern and western Afghanistan previously considered to be low-risk. There has also been insufficient progress in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of factional forces. Many of the violent incidents in recent weeks have involved factional fighting and the use of heavy weapons. Thus, the ability of the factional forces to undermine the results of the elections underscores the urgency of accelerating the DDR process. Again, increased acts of violence have been directed at the staff and offices of the electoral secretariat and at United Nations workers, jeopardizing the electoral process. And, as has been pointed out, there have been increased attacks against humanitarian non-governmental organizations — particularly the killing of five staff of Medecins Sans Frontières, which resulted in the withdrawal of its operations from Afghanistan.

The tenuous security situation has been created by the forces of extremism, factionalism and the fast-growing narcotics industry. Financial gains from the burgeoning narcotics industry are being used to further the activities of extremists. That situation not only puts the electoral process in critical jeopardy in the short term, but also very adversely affects the various aspects of the peace process — DDR, governance, the human rights situation, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction — in the long term. The continued presence of humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan

is essential, because their departure would adversely affect much-needed humanitarian and development activities in the country.

My delegation fully supports the Secretary-General's conclusion on the vital importance of security assistance to Afghanistan to ensure the holding of a free, fair and credible electoral process there. That in turn will provide the political legitimacy and the foundation for the elected Government to make decisions and to undertake the actions needed to advance all aspects of the peace process. Indeed, as the Secretary-General said, the international community cannot afford to waver now. The international community should match the courage and determination that the Afghan people are showing. Everyone has a stake in successful nation-building in Afghanistan, because global security is affected by what transpires in Afghanistan.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation expresses our deepest condolences to you, to your Government and to the families of the victims for the loss of two Russian passenger aeroplanes.

We are grateful to you for organizing this public meeting to consider the situation in Afghanistan and its consequences for international peace and security, which is the subject of a complete report (S/2004/634) submitted by the Secretary-General for the Council's consideration. We should like to express our great appreciation to Mr. Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for having briefly presented to us its broad outlines.

In the past few years, Afghanistan has made significant progress on the path of normalization. That progress is unquestionably to the credit of the Afghan Government, which is guiding the country's destiny against all obstacles on the path laid out by the Bonn and Berlin international conferences. We also attribute that progress to the international community, which has assisted the peace process begun in the country in December 2001. The important stages that have been successfully completed would not have been possible without the constant mobilization of bilateral and multilateral partners for the restoration of the rule of law and for national reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

The Secretary-General refers in his report to the many constraints preventing the Government from moving forward at the desired pace in building the foundations of a democratic State resolutely committed to promoting sustainable development. In the report, he highlights the steps that must be taken to overcome those obstacles. We believe that the question of strengthening the Government's legitimacy is crucial, because a cause-and-effect relationship is established between that legitimacy and eliminating resistance by the informal actors and networks that characterize the nature of power in Afghanistan.

For our part, we link the question of legitimacy directly to the holding of the elections, whose preparations are under way in the Joint Election Management Body. We welcome the remarkable progress made in establishing voter lists, which proves that the Afghan people truly aspire to democracy. We understand the objective reasons that compelled the Joint Election Management Body to revise the electoral calendar. We believe that the Afghan Government should do its utmost to create optimum conditions for the holding of free, transparent and truly democratic elections. In that regard, only the happy outcome of the process could validate the Government's many efforts to put the legal and institutional framework in place and to register the electoral body.

Quite rightly, it is essential to guarantee appropriate security conditions. That is a demand that challenges the international community, because it requires a marked increase in international security assistance. From that perspective, the assessment of the situation in terms of security in the country is very disquieting with regard to the resurgence of violence throughout the country — particularly violence directed against the electoral process and against humanitarian assistance personnel, which we condemn.

The many incidents cited in the report show the gravity of the situation. That raises questions about the possibility of holding the elections in the current conditions, and it directly affects the increase in human rights violations. We believe that the international community must find ways to help Afghanistan to consistently carry out the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to limit the clashes among the factions, which are reaching unprecedented intensity. We welcome the efforts made in that area, and we particularly welcome the end of registration and the beginning of the cantonment of heavy weapons. Special attention should be devoted to problems related to guarding the cantonment sites.

Similarly, we welcome the success of the international conference on Afghanistan and its efforts to restore the police force in Afghanistan, as well as the commitment by 26 donor countries to mobilize the necessary resources for that purpose.

We agree with the Secretary-General's positive assessment of the decision taken by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in Istanbul, which met at the end of June 2004, to deploy new troops in order to allow the elections to proceed smoothly.

Here we would like to repeat the appeal made by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for assistance to registered political parties that do not have the necessary resources to conduct electoral campaigns. For this purpose, we should also guarantee them equitable access to the State-run television and radio stations outside Kabul.

We welcome the arrangements made to facilitate the return of refugees and allow those who are still abroad to exercise their right to vote. We cannot fail to mention here our concern regarding the resistance to the campaign against drugs, which must be continued in order to reduce the negative impact drug trade has on the situation in the country. We would like here to repeat the appeal made by the Secretary-General for increased assistance to Afghanistan in order to continue this campaign in close cooperation with countries in the region.

In conclusion, we would like to pay tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his activities at the head of UNAMA under, as we all know, difficult conditions.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, let us join others in expressing our deepest condolences to you, Sir, and to the people of the Russian Federation. Please accept our heartfelt condolences for the loss of innocent lives in the two plane crashes in your country yesterday.

I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Jean Arnault, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing to the Council on the current situation in Afghanistan.

President Karzai has just completed a two-day official visit to Islamabad, in which he held wide-ranging talks on a number of issues with President Musharraf and Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. At the end of the talks, President Karzai said that the outcome of that discussion was the reaffirmation of brotherly ties between the two countries and the reaffirmation of our joint struggle against terrorism. President Musharraf, for his part, stated that anybody trying to carry out terrorist activities in Afghanistan or to disrupt the election process will not be allowed to do so from Pakistan. We will act against them, he declared. The Pakistan army is operating very strongly against Al Qaeda. We know that they are on the run; they are dispersed and displaced from a number of valleys which were their sanctuaries.

Thus, Pakistan is sparing no effort to assist Afghanistan in all possible fields, and especially security. As we have heard from Mr. Arnault, security in Afghanistan remains a major concern. We agree with that assessment. Without security, there can be no stability, no progress in the political process and no reconstruction or recovery.

Afghanistan now faces a major challenge in the forthcoming elections. Pakistan attaches great importance to this important landmark of the Bonn process. It is equally important that these elections are free, fair and credible. While we are pleased to note that some 10 million Afghan voters have been registered, we remain concerned that sufficient registration has not taken place in the south and south-eastern parts of Afghanistan, mainly due to security concerns. At the same time, we remain concerned that vested interests in powerful warlords will seek to undermine or unfairly influence the electoral process. Therefore we believe it is of the utmost importance for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to provide early, effective and enhanced security for the elections throughout the country.

Pakistan is extending full cooperation and support to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Government of Afghanistan in their preparations for the out-of-country participation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan in the 9 October presidential elections. To this effect, Pakistan has signed a memorandum of understanding with UNAMA and the Afghan Government on 20 July. We have also pledged $5 million for that purpose. Currently, Pakistan is facilitating the movement of UNAMA and IOM personnel to various refugee camps located in the north-west frontier province and Baluchistan.

While we are pleased that the Afghan refugees in Pakistan will be participating in the presidential elections, we hope that they will also have an opportunity to participate in future elections for the parliament. These people are Afghan citizens and, as such, they retain their democratic rights to vote in any future Afghan elections. Those Afghans who are currently in Pakistan are not economic migrants, but refugees who fled war and suffering in their home country. We hope that, ultimately, ways will be found to return and repatriate all Afghans currently in Pakistan to their places of origin in Afghanistan.

The threats to Afghanistan's security lie inside Afghanistan, and we agree that these threats arise from faction leaders, from criminal lords and from extremists, including Al Qaeda and the Taliban. But as President Karzai himself stated on 12 July, the warlords and their private armies are the greatest threat to Afghanistan's security, even more than the Taliban.

An article that appeared in the journal *Foreign Affairs* three months ago, by Kathy Gannon, who knows Afghanistan well, stated the following:

> "The warlords have now ruled the country for two years and Afghanistan seems to be degenerating into a sort of narco-State, which could spin out of control. Not only are the warlords complicit in drug-running and corruption but, according to Afghanistan's Human Rights Committee, they are also guilty of abusing and harassing the population. The warlords have stolen people's homes, arbitrarily arrested their enemies and tortured them in private jails."

The primary mistake, in our view, has been to rely on the warlords and factional forces to provide stability in Afghanistan. The result of this mistake is the creation of security vacuums in large parts of Afghanistan, to which the authority of the central Government does not extend and where lawlessness, corruption and drug trafficking thrive. This has alienated a large part of Afghanistan's society and created the conditions for extremists and others to undermine the political process.

The insecurity in the south and south-east is not difficult to understand. There is, first, alienation due to political exclusion and the activities of drug rings and criminals. These are similar circumstances to those that existed in 1992 and 1993, when the Taliban emerged.

There is also no security presence in the south or south-east. Coalition forces are engaged mainly in anti-terrorist activities. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is deployed in Kabul and Kondoz but has no real presence to provide real security in the south. The Afghan National Army itself is small — 13,500 troops at the moment — and is not in a position to cope with security challenges. Moreover, in the south, it suffers from what I would call an ethnic deficit or imbalance. Until the Afghan national forces are in a position to provide credible security, it will continue to fall on the international forces — and in particular on ISAF — to step into the breech and to create circumstances for security, particularly in the south and south-east. It is our view that, without a substantial increase in ISAF's strength and its robust deployment throughout Afghanistan, there is likely to be no disarmament and no credible demobilization or reintegration of factional forces.

I would like to ask Mr. Jean Arnault how the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reached the conclusion that the factional militias now number around 50,000, instead of the 100,000 previously estimated. Does that reduction result from the exclusion of militias attached to certain members of the Government, or has some other form of calculation been resorted to that has changed the figure? In our view, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) will proceed when all the factional leaders accept the demobilization and genuine disarmament of their militias, and not their recapping under so-called national commanders. That will not change the nature of the militias.

As the security situation continues to deteriorate and the warlords and criminals wreak havoc, conditions very similar to those that prevailed in 1992-1993 are being recreated. That is when the Taliban emerged. Chaos and insecurity in Afghanistan are once again breeding extremism. Unfortunately, instead of addressing those problems head on, there are some in certain quarters who are seeking to shift the blame for the insecurity in Afghanistan onto Pakistan. There seems to be a compulsion on the part of some, including certain individuals, who wish to find scapegoats for failing to address the real security threats in Afghanistan. Unfortunately as well, even some UNAMA officials seem to be playing into their hands, or playing their game. Pakistan has taken serious note of that, and we will look for assurances of

objectivity and impartiality on the part of the United Nations.

Pakistan has followed a strict hands-off approach to internal developments in Afghanistan. We are extending our full cooperation in the war against terrorism. Our agreement on good-neighbourly relations, the memorandum of understanding on security and narcotics and the functioning of the Pakistan-Afghanistan-United States tripartite commission are clear manifestations of our commitment and of our policy. Pakistan has undertaken the following concrete measures in counter-terrorism to interdict suspects and to check infiltration across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

We have deployed 75,000 troops and established 800 posts and a number of forts along the border with Afghanistan. We have absorbed no-go areas in other tribal areas in South Waziristan, Khyber and Mohmend. We have established a quick-reaction force to deal with terrorists. We carry out aerial surveillance of the border and use helicopter-borne troops. We have fenced off a 25-kilometre stretch of the border and installed search lights and video cameras at border crossings. We have established an interdiction force in Baluchistan to prevent infiltration. In addition, the operations of the Pakistan army in South Waziristan Agency continue. Our forces have killed 165 terrorists and militants, including Commander Nek Muhammad, and arrested several hundred others. Our forces are operating in the most inhospitable and difficult terrain. We have lost 100 of our personnel in this operation.

Pakistan is sustaining its efforts despite technical capacity deficits in equipment, unmanned air vehicles, surveillance equipment, attack helicopters, night vision devices and long-range communications systems. We have also persisted in this campaign in the face of fierce opposition from certain extremist groups within Pakistan. There can therefore be no doubt as to our commitment to wipe out the terrorist menace from our region. Our commitment was acknowledged yesterday by President Karzai when he spoke about the reaffirmation of the brotherly ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan and "the reaffirmation of our joint struggle against terrorism".

Security is also essential for reconstruction and development in Afghanistan. But reconstruction will also improve the prospects for security. Pakistan has pledged $100 million for Afghanistan's reconstruction. Those funds are being used in sectors identified by the Afghans themselves. Projects are under way for the development of infrastructure, schools and hospitals; the construction of Turkham-Jalalabad road, which will be completed in July; and the Chaman-Kandahar rail link. Pakistan is also assisting Afghanistan in capacity-building for important State institutions in law enforcement, diplomacy, the judiciary, customs, postal services, taxation, banking, finance, audit and accounts. During President Karzai's visit, we agreed to boost trade further from the $1 billion at which it now stands and we are working together with Afghanistan and Turkmenistan to build a gas pipeline, which holds great potential for the whole region.

We remain concerned, however, that despite the substantive pledges made both at Tokyo and Berlin, Afghanistan continues to receive far less reconstruction than what it requires. Even if pledges from both those conferences are realized, Afghanistan will still receive far less per capita assistance than that provided in similar circumstances provided in other crisis situations.

Two years ago, during President Musharraf's first visit to Kabul, he told President Karzai, "Your plan is our plan". That still remains Pakistan's policy. A peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is in the best interests of Pakistan. To achieve that objective, we are doing, and we will continue to do, all that we can, including securing the long, difficult and inhospitable border between our two countries.

However, there should be no attempt to underplay the enormity of the internal security and political problems in Afghanistan. Nor should we be complacent about the insufficient levels of security in reconstruction support deployed by the international community in Afghanistan. Much more needs to be done by the international community in all the areas affecting security and reconstruction. Shifting the blame, finding scapegoats for failures in Afghanistan and asking those who are already doing more to do even more is unfair and unacceptable and will be ultimately self-defeating.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): I would like to ask you, Mr. President, please to convey the United Kingdom's condolences to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation on the double air disaster that you suffered yesterday.

My delegation associates itself with the statement to be made shortly by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union.

I want to start by thanking Jean Arnault, not only for what I found a very coherent briefing but also for the enormous efforts that his team and he himself have made. We are all focused this morning in particular on the election process, and I think that the high level of voter registration represents, if nothing else, a huge technical achievement by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and by Afghan and international election personnel, who have displayed considerable courage and skill in achieving this result.

But it is more than just a technical achievement: it is a major political development. It is a demonstration of the remarkable determination of the Afghan people to exercise their new democratic rights. It is not perfect, but it suggests that the time of the men of violence is coming to an end. There is now a prospect for channelling Afghanistan's development through peaceful political channels. It is eloquent, I think, that the Taliban and other undemocratic forces are, as we have heard this morning, specifically targeting the electoral process. They know that successful elections will be their defeat.

The Istanbul NATO summit in June agreed to the expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF); the subsequent agreement to deploy resources to assist the Afghans to provide security for the electoral process is important. But those resources have to be deployed as quickly as possible. It is equally important that the momentum behind ISAF expansion not be lost and that ISAF now push on into the west of the country.

But Ambassador Akram is not wrong to focus on the situation in the south and the west of the country in particular. We are concerned at the lack of political freedoms there. It is not a question, I think, of asking some to do more than others, but of asking everyone — the international community, including Afghanistan's neighbours — to do even more to support Afghanistan in ensuring that elections are free from intimidation and violence. And I think that Mr. Arnault will agree that it is important to use the remaining days before 9 October to ensure that voter turnout will be high on 9 October among Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan as well as inside Afghanistan.

But as many speakers before me have pointed out, promising though electoral registration has been, the security situation remains fragile and very troubling. Beyond the elections, there will still be security challenges. That emphasizes the importance of building capacity to enable Afghans to provide for their own security, even if in the meantime it continues to fall to the international community to provide the necessary security assistance through ISAF and its provincial reconstruction teams, as well as through ongoing coalition activity. So we need to focus also on building the criminal justice system and boosting the delivery of justice and the rule of law. In other words, there are long-term challenges as well as the short-term one of 9 October.

One of those challenges is progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). Progress has been slow but, as we have heard this morning, there is solid progress to report in the context of the difficult circumstances on the ground. The United Kingdom sees it as vital that the promises or undertakings given by presidential election candidates to disarm or distance themselves from operational control of militia forces are upheld. We think that the period between presidential and parliamentary elections offers a particular opportunity to make rapid advances on DDR. It is important that that opportunity should be seized. The international community must continue to identify ways to offer effective support in this area.

Given our role as lead nation, the United Kingdom knows, perhaps better than others around this table, just how big another long-term challenge is: that of counter-narcotics. We continue to attach the highest priority to tackling drugs in Afghanistan. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2004/634) makes clear, tackling the problem is a daunting challenge. There are no shortcuts to success in what is a hugely complex and long-term problem. If the challenge is to be met, we and others in the international community will need to continue to work together. The building blocks are in place, but we need to consolidate our activity on the ground; of course, increased security across Afghanistan and tackling corrupting will be key.

I wanted to close with a word on human rights, which are a cause for concern. We share the Secretary-General's assessment, and we call on the Afghan Government to consider seriously the forthcoming report by the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights on human rights violations and on transitional justice.

We see improvements in human rights as inextricably linked to further improvements in security and governance. Once again, concerted international support for the rebuilding of national security and police institutions, together with further disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), will be vital in this respect. But the Afghan Government can also do more, including by stopping the appointment of known human rights violators to Government posts.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish at the outset to convey to the Government and the people of Russia the sorrow and condolences of the Chinese delegation at the two unfortunate aeroplane crashes that took place in Russia yesterday.

I thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his briefing, and I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2004/634).

Four months ago, the Security Council held a public meeting (see S/PV.4941) to welcome the important results of the Berlin Conference. The Afghan Government has made unremitting efforts, with the help of the international community, to promote the Bonn process and to implement the Berlin consensus; a great deal of progress has been achieved. We appreciate the important role played by the United Nations, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The holding of free and fair elections and the establishment of a fully representative Government are priority tasks for Afghanistan. The elections will be an important milestone in the peace process there. We welcome the fact that the timing of presidential and parliamentary elections has been established. The Afghan people place high hopes on the elections for the security and development of their country. Although the voter registration process has seen violent attacks, much encouraging progress has been achieved. This demonstrates that the Afghan people have great confidence and determination with respect to promoting the peace process. Indeed, the successful conduct of the elections and the continued promotion of the process of peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan constitute a daunting task for the Afghan Government and for the international community.

As the report of the Secretary-General states, the increasingly tenuous security situation in Afghanistan threatens the Bonn process. Therefore, firm measures must be taken to tackle terrorism, factionalism and problems related to narcotics. With the presidential elections drawing near, it is even more necessary and urgent to improve the security situation.

Here, let me make a number of observations. First, we support the Afghan Government as it continues with security-sector reform, steps up its work on building the National Army and the National Police, and promotes disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). It is our sincere hope that all of Afghanistan's ethnic groups will focus on the national interest and will seek common ground, putting aside their differences and seeking unity, all with a view to maintaining national peace and unity and making a common effort towards economic reconstruction and development.

Secondly, counter-narcotics efforts must be made. The cultivation of and trafficking in narcotics have put Afghanistan's political, economic and social development in grave danger, along with regional stability. We appreciate the Afghan Government's counter-narcotics measures and call upon the international community to devote greater attention to Afghanistan and to lend it assistance in this regard. China will continue to work with regional countries to implement the Declaration on Counter-Narcotics within the Framework of the Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations.

Thirdly, we call on the international community to take action in response to the appeal of the Secretary-General and to provide adequate security assistance to Afghanistan, especially to meet security needs during the presidential and parliamentary elections. We welcome the decision of Spain and Italy to send additional peacekeeping troops to Afghanistan. At the same time, the international community should honour its financial commitments to Afghanistan so as to meet the country's financial needs with respect to the elections, security-sector reform and the restoration of the rule of law.

China attaches great importance to the process of peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan and supports it. This year we shall provide $15 million in assistance. China's $1 million in assistance for the elections in Afghanistan will be on the ground by the end of

September. On 10 June 2004, Chinese engineers working in Afghanistan were the victims of a terrorist attack; 11 innocent Chinese engineers sacrificed their lives for the process of peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan. We strongly condemn that violent atrocity and demand that the perpetrators be brought to justice. I wish also to reaffirm that China will not yield to terrorism of any kind and, as it always has, will participate actively in the process of peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Mr. Duclos (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would ask you to convey to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation our deepest sorrow at the deaths of your compatriots in the recent air disasters.

France fully endorses the statement to be made shortly by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union.

We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2004/634) and to Mr. Jean Arnault, his Special Representative, for his outstanding briefing this morning.

As we meet today, there is no doubt that we must consider a number of concerns related to the situation in Afghanistan. Previous speakers have observed that the report of the Secretary-General notes that progress in security-sector reform remains too slow, that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) has been inadequate, that counter-narcotics efforts have not been as successful as we would have liked, and that the human rights situation remains poor.

Among such concerns, one must be highlighted: the deterioration of the security situation in recent weeks and months. The reasons for this are undoubtedly many: the increase in factional conflict, the resurgence of the Taliban and perhaps instances of major criminality. Whatever the reasons, it is humanitarian and United Nations personnel who are the victims of this increased lack of security. Here, we wish again absolutely to condemn such violence. A major international organization has been forced to withdraw from Afghanistan. We respect its decision. A discussion about the reasons for its withdrawal has begun. In my view, the best way to conclude that discussion would be to pursue the guilty parties with determination, to arrest them and to bring them to justice. It is very important that justice be done, especially in the case of those odious individuals responsible for crimes against humanitarian personnel and United Nations staff.

In that context, the Special Representative chose to underscore the success — even if it is relative success, it is still very important — in the registration process and the preparations for the presidential election. We believe that Mr. Arnault was right, and we believe that those elements are of great importance for the following three reasons.

First, as others have said before me, it is clear that the determination and the courage shown by the Afghans themselves in carrying out their civic duties are the best response in the face of cynical and pessimistic factors that might sometimes prevail in our analysis. It is clear that it is the resistance of Afghan men and women to the pressure and violence of those wanting to stop them from exercising their rights as citizens that best testifies to the determination of the Afghan people to emerge from the current situation and rebuild the country. At the same time, I should note that what has been done and what is going to be done are remarkable demonstrations of the technical capacities and the courage of the United Nations Mission and other actors that have contributed to this success.

Secondly, we believe that the manner in which the registration process has unfolded defines the next task — an immediate task for the international community — which is to ensure the proper holding of the presidential election and, beyond that, the legislative elections. Naturally, I subscribe to the comments of the Special Representative and other speakers on the importance they attach in this context to creating the best possible security conditions. It is up to all of us to strengthen our efforts in this sphere.

I note that France, for its part, has enhanced its military presence in Afghanistan through the deployment of the European Corps and the Franco-German brigade. A French general is now at the head of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). We have also increased our staff within ISAF itself. We have done likewise within the framework of the coalition, and we are enhancing our efforts in the third training course for officers of the Afghan army. Our military personnel will number between 1,000 and 1,500 in coming days.

Finally, a third reason to underline the electoral process is the great importance of the presidential

election. We believe that with the presidential election a very important page will be turned in today's Afghanistan. We believe that these elections will mark the beginning of the end for those forces attempting to thwart the progress and the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We believe it is important to note that a certain number of efforts and programmes the international community has undertaken for many months now — we recognize their limits and know that they have not had all the impact we would have wished — will at that time start to have an increasing impact and to gain increasing traction once this important page has been turned. That page is quite simply, as Mr. Arnault said, the page of the establishment of a legitimate order that Afghans have accepted in order to take charge of their country.

In conclusion, my country enthusiastically supports the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault. We believe that he has been a messenger of hope today. We are confident that this hope will come to fruition if the international community as a whole continues to rally together and mobilize its assistance of Afghanistan.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Like my colleagues, I wish to convey to you, Sir, our sincere condolences and profound sympathy in connection with the two aviation catastrophes that have left behind so many bereaved families in Russia.

I welcome Mr. Jean Arnault and thank him for his excellent presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2004/634) and for the valuable information he has given the Council, in particular with regard to the election calendar and the stakes involved.

The peace process in Afghanistan has reached a crucial phase today — perhaps the most crucial phase — with the holding of the first presidential election, on 9 October, and the legislative elections, to be held in April 2005. These elections, so long awaited by the Afghan people, are an important step in implementing the Bonn process because they will enable the country to lay the first foundations for democracy and to move towards political and institutional stability. We hope that this democratic exercise will lead to the establishment of a representative Government and that the elections will take place in optimal conditions of equity and transparency, as well as of security, whose importance for the success of the elections is evident.

In that context, we welcome the rate of registration. Almost 10 million voters have been registered — 41 per cent of them women. That clearly demonstrates the determination of the Afghan people to fully engage in the process of rebuilding the country. In that context, special tribute should be paid to the members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), in particular the electoral workers, who have done outstanding work in extremely difficult conditions, sometimes risking their lives.

We welcome the Afghan Government's progress in implementing the work plan adopted at the Berlin conference, in particular in the areas of public administration, budgetary management and economic and social development. However, emphasis must be put on eliminating poverty, strengthening the rule of law and promoting and protecting human rights.

We note that the security situation is increasingly worrisome, and, in fact, we are witnessing an ongoing deterioration of the situation. This risks a negative impact on the holding of elections, a weakening of the peace process and a hindrance to reconstruction efforts. The south and south-east zones, where Taliban and other extremist groups remain militarily active, have seen a renewed outbreak of attacks against the police, the Afghan National Army and humanitarian workers. That has led, among other things, to the withdrawal of Doctors without Borders, whose activities were valued by the entire population. Those attacks have served to deprive the population of the benefits of reconstruction and have slowed the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). Tensions related to the existence of such factions are another source of concern in the north and north-west of the country — previously considered low-risk regions — where grave acts of violence have been committed. That is why it is urgent to vigorously implement the DDR programme and to accelerate the cantonment of heavy weapons — since the progress made in those areas has been insufficient — and to expand the presence of international forces.

Another factor destabilizing the political process is drug production and trafficking, which are a grave threat to the development and security of Afghanistan and require stronger support for the eradication and interdiction measures adopted by the Afghan

Government to put an end to illicit poppy cultivation. We must also encourage the promotion of alternative crops as well as cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours aimed at creating a security zone along its borders.

Finally, international support must continue in the area of security to complete the process begun by the Bonn Agreement and to ensure the success of the coming elections. It is also essential to work to discourage inter-factional violence, to facilitate the deployment of Afghan security forces and to help them put an end to the illicit drug trade. In that regard, the decision taken by NATO to increase the forces deployed in Afghanistan is, as the Secretary-General indicated in his report, very encouraging. However, it is important that that decision be implemented swiftly.

Mr. Dumitru (Romania): At the outset, I would like to express to you, Mr. President, and to the people and the Government of the Russian Federation Romania's heartfelt condolences for the tragic accidents involving the two Russian aeroplanes. We also express our deepest sympathy to the bereaved families.

I am pleased to join other delegations in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his excellent opening briefing, which provided us with a timely and useful update on the situation in Afghanistan. I wish also to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (S/2004/634).

Romania aligns itself with the statement to be made shortly by the Permanent Representative of Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. Therefore, I shall confine myself to specific comments.

In less than two months, Afghanistan will be entering the crucial phase of presidential elections. At this time, I do not wish to evoke the symbolism of that essential stage in Afghanistan's democratic transformation, but I do wish to point out a few aspects that, in our view, remain key prerequisites for holding presidential elections. The ultimate objective should be to have credible, fair and free elections. To that end, no effort should be spared by the international community in supporting the Afghans to address the remaining challenges in the coming months: improving the security situation, accelerating the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and continuing the registration process.

First, given the triad formed by extremist violence, factionalism and the narcotics industry — the main threats to the current situation in Afghanistan — there is undoubtedly a need for a greater focus on security. In particular, the approach of the elections seems to be generating an unprecedented resurgence of activities perpetrated by those who oppose the current political and stabilization processes. In that context, we fully agree with the idea expressed by the Secretary-General in his report that, in order to ensure the conditions for free and fair elections, a net increase in international security assistance remains indispensable. Much more work must also be done to restore a security environment consistent with the expansion of humanitarian and development activities. Equally essential are the security measures requested to ensure greater safety for United Nations personnel and assets.

It is beyond doubt that preventing instability from taking an increased hold in Afghanistan must be matched by the international community's determination to stand by its commitments. In that regard, Romania welcomes the decisions adopted in Istanbul at the NATO summit, and we believe that setting up new provincial reconstruction teams and committing new resources are crucial for the future of Afghanistan. NATO's increased contribution in Afghanistan demonstrates once more the political weight and effective impact of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in stabilization processes.

For its part, Romania remains committed in Afghanistan. Our contribution of self-sustaining troops and personnel to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and to Operation Enduring Freedom amounts to 500 personnel. At the same time, Romania will continue to contribute military technology and personnel to help build the capacity of Afghanistan's national armed forces.

As a number of successes achieved in the areas of public administration and economic and social development demonstrate, international support must be strongly associated with the Afghan authorities' own efforts to complete the process of reforming the national security institutions and extending authority throughout the country. That is the only way to make a difference in overcoming the obstacles engendered

both by decades of war and by the very nature of power in Afghanistan in recent years.

Secondly, with regard to voter registration, we are enthusiastic about UNAMA's reports on the impressive number of Afghans who have registered to vote, and we especially appreciate the fact that women account for some 41 per cent of that number. UNAMA deserves a strong commendation for the efforts undertaken in that regard. Moreover, in view of the parliamentary elections to be held by April next year, we would like to stress the importance of further sustained and coordinated actions aimed at achieving a multi-ethnic balance at the executive and legislative levels. The regional imbalances in total voter registration rates should be a serious warning in that regard.

Thirdly, regarding the implementation of DDR, we believe there is a need for further progress in order to ensure a safer environment for the holding of the elections. However, the issue of reintegrating former soldiers should be cautiously approached, particularly in the light of the current high unemployment level and taking into account its potential for generating further instability.

Finally, in view of the general partnership between Afghanistan and the international community - as reaffirmed at the Berlin conference — we would like to briefly highlight the potential of regional cooperation for boosting the stability and development of Afghanistan. The declaration adopted at the high-level conference on regional economic cooperation, held in May in Bishkek, rightly stressed the importance of regional cooperation for Afghanistan's recovery and for stability in the region. Romania strongly encourages Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries to develop concrete projects of cooperation at the regional level, both in the economic field and in combating narco-trafficking.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Russian Federation.

First of all, I express my gratitude to all those who addressed words of sympathy to my country in connection with the two simultaneous air crashes that took dozens of lives: thank you all, colleagues.

I am pleased to welcome Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and to thank him for his detailed briefing on the situation in that country. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his most recent report (S/2004/634) on the situation in Afghanistan and on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We agree with the report's key conclusion: that pride of place must continue to be given to ensuring security in Afghanistan. Of special concern is the fact that, with the date of the Afghan presidential elections approaching, there has been an increase in the wave of terrorist acts carried out by extremists from the Taliban and other anti-Government factions. There has been an increase in the number of raids targeting national and international security forces, staff of public institutions and humanitarian personnel. There have been more attacks on polling sites and more threats to voter registration teams. It is obvious that the foes of normalization of the situation are attempting, by any means possible, to undermine the process of preparing for the presidential election.

We endorse the Secretary-General's view that decisive measures must urgently be taken to correct the situation. We must not underestimate the threat posed in Afghanistan by the destabilizing activities of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. We have repeatedly drawn attention to the grave threat posed by a renewal of the Taliban's military and political potential, by the continuing infiltration of fighters into Afghanistan and by the emergence of a neo-Taliban faction. We believe that the notion of so-called moderate Taliban and attempts to flirt with them can only lead to serious consequences and will nullify everything that has been achieved.

But it appears that the focus of recent efforts has been shifting from a campaign against the Taliban and the drug lords who support them to disarmament, primarily of field commanders in the north, the overwhelming majority of whom are loyal to the current regime and are prepared to defend it.

Let there be no doubt of our concern at the scanty progress made in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of Afghan factions. The explosive security situation dictates the need urgently to accelerate the process of weapons collection. But this must be carried out not in isolated regions but throughout the country.

Moscow has taken note of the recent decision of the Joint Electoral Management Body to stagger the presidential and parliamentary elections. But the

serious danger remains that as result of that decision — which violates the documents of the Bonn and Berlin conferences — the country will face an explosive situation fraught with new armed resistance and internal fragmentation of power structures.

Success in the political process in Afghanistan is intimately linked with maintaining the central coordinating role of the United Nations in an Afghan settlement. International institutions are currently increasing the level of their activities in Afghanistan. NATO, Eurocorps within the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), coalition forces and many non-governmental organizations are present. There has been an increase in the number of provincial reconstruction teams and more frequent proposals that those teams and ISAF be merged under NATO leadership. We proceed from the premise that the parameters for the involvement of international institutions, including NATO, must be unambiguously regulated through a Security Council mandate. Only in that way can we ensure the necessary legitimacy for international efforts in the security sphere.

Effective solutions to the problem of Afghanistan are intimately linked with stemming the growth of illegal drug production and trafficking. The Afghan Government's action in that regard has had little effect to date. The danger that Afghanistan will become a State whose economy is dominated by illegal drug trafficking is increasingly coming to pass. The further development of the situation in that direction would threaten efforts to restore and rebuild the country, and in the long term would threaten peace and stability throughout the region.

In that context, Russia is convinced of the importance of devising a comprehensive international counter-narcotics strategy, including the establishment of a security belt along the Afghan borders. We believe that the key task of the Security Council at this stage is to provide the Afghan authorities and the international community with all possible assistance in strengthening their action to prevent the further destabilization of the situation in Afghanistan on the eve of elections and to ensure the most favourable conditions possible for the holding of those elections.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker is the representative of Afghanistan, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): Allow me, Mr. President, to express to you our deep sorrow and sympathy in relation to the two tragic airline accidents that took place yesterday in Russia. Through you, we convey our condolences to the Russian Government, to the Russian people and to the families of the victims.

Allow me also to present to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your new assignment as Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations and to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Council for the current month. I thank you and the other members of the Council for including on this month's agenda an open meeting on the situation in Afghanistan. Such a meeting provides an opportunity to assess the overall situation in Afghanistan in the presence of the Afghan delegation.

For almost three years the Afghan Government has been making major progress in implementing the Bonn Agreement, which was concluded on 5 December 2001. At present, we are reaching the final stages of the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. The presidential election is going to be held on 9 October 2004 and the parliamentary election will be held in April 2005. The political dynamism and enthusiasm generated among Afghans by those elections can be observed in the high number of voter registrations. According to recent data, more than 10.5 million Afghans have received their voter registration cards. More than 41 per cent of registrants are women.

Different political and social organizations and political actors on Afghanistan's political scene are involved in political debate and discourse in these two historic elections. These positive political developments are a major blow to those extremist groups that were engaged in the propaganda of intimidation and threats directed at persons participating in the democratic process. The attempt to derail elections through violent attacks failed. It is important to mention that the United Nations, in its impartial and central role, has performed its assignments in preparing the election and registering voters. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, and the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) have played a major role throughout that process.

The Afghan delegation is thankful to Mr. Jean Arnault for his comprehensive briefing at today's meeting, during which he ably updated the Secretary-

General's report of 12 August 2004 (S/2004/634). I am also thankful to the members of the Security Council for their active participation in the debate on the situation in Afghanistan. They have provided us with important views and ideas about the subject.

Achievements in Afghanistan have generally tended towards the consolidation of peace and security. However, despite that predominant trend, attempts to sabotage and destabilize the situation continue by remnants of Al Qaeda and Taliban groups, particularly along the eastern and southern borders of Afghanistan — attempts that are aimed at challenging the authority and legitimacy of the Afghan Government. Those elements have their network support in certain politico-religious circles outside Afghanistan. The armed forces of Afghanistan, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the anti-terrorist coalition forces are actively involved in thwarting the subversive and terrorist attacks of extremist groups, which are mainly targeting the innocent civilian population, relief workers and those who are working for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country.

The major development of the past year was the adoption of a Security Council resolution regarding the expansion of the ISAF beyond Kabul and the establishment of provincial reconstruction teams. The Afghan Government welcomed the adoption of that resolution.

NATO, which took over command of ISAF in August 2003, has played a beneficial role in efforts to consolidate peace. Another major development in that context was the transfer of ISAF command to the Eurocorps. Afghanistan is thankful to NATO and welcomes the Eurocorps command and its commander General Jean-Louis Py. We also appreciate the remarkable contribution of Lieutenant-General Rick Hillier, the outgoing Canadian commander. Afghanistan looks forward to the expansion of ISAF as planned, to assure a secure environment during the coming elections.

As we have indicated in previous meetings of the Council, economic recovery and reconstruction in Afghanistan, security and improving the lives of the Afghan people are closely interrelated. Visible rehabilitation and reconstruction enhance the authority of the Government and greatly contribute to the peace process. The Government should have the ability to provide services, launch major projects, build roads and create jobs. Thousands of ex-combatants should be reintegrated. Only the viable creation of economic growth can assure successful implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. The active participation of the international community and financial assistance to reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in Afghanistan contribute greatly to the restoration of democracy and the consolidation of peace and stability. The full disbursement of commitments made at the Berlin Conference, which was held from 31 March to 1 April 2004, is essential in that context.

During the recent official visit of President Karzai to Pakistan, from 22 and 23 August 2004, President Musharraf held out a categorical assurance to the Afghan President, assuring him that he would not allow anybody to use Pakistan's territory for actions against the interests of Afghanistan. Anybody trying to carry out terrorist activities in Afghanistan or to disrupt the election process or create law and order problems will not be allowed from Pakistan. Pakistan will act against them.

In conclusion, I wish to assure the Council that there is no alienation of any ethnic group in Afghanistan, including in the southern and eastern border areas. The Taliban emerged in southern Afghanistan and recruited from the border areas only at the end of 1994. The many scholarly books describing the facts that have been published to date about the Taliban should be read if we want to understand the events of today. We hope that the time will come when Doctors Without Borders will resume their valuable services in Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Afghanistan for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Netherlands. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands): At the outset, Mr. President, I extend my sincere condolences, through you, to the Russian people and to the Government of the Russian Federation on the tragic loss of lives in the two air crashes that occurred yesterday.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the decision announced by the Joint Electoral Management Body to hold presidential elections in Afghanistan in October 2004. Those elections are a key requirement under the Bonn Agreement of December 2001 and represent a new milestone in the process of constructing a democratic, stable and prosperous Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Joint Electoral Management Body has announced that the elections for the lower house of parliament and the local elections will be held in spring 2005.

The European Union welcomes the fact that an encouraging number of presidential candidates have put forward their candidacy. This is an important landmark on the path towards democracy. The European Union understands that technical and logistical reasons made it impossible to hold both sets of elections concurrently this autumn. It is now important to use the remaining months to ensure that successful preparations continue apace and that all conditions are met for free and fair elections according to the timetable set by the Joint Electoral Management Body.

In that context, the European Union wishes to command the Joint Electoral Management Body's tremendous achievement with the registration of nearly all eligible voters in Afghanistan and welcomes the fact that, among those registered voters, 41 per cent are women. The European Union is supporting and assisting the Afghan Government in the preparation of elections, inter alia through financial assistance and the Democracy and Election Support Mission.

The European Union condemns the violence against election workers, which has resulted in several casualties. Similarly, the European Union is also gravely concerned about the deplorable murders and attacks directed against international humanitarian personnel and those working for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The high levels of insecurity in several areas of Afghanistan are a reminder of the need to provide security during the elections, to rebuild the Afghan army and to intensify the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The commitment and engagement of the Afghan Transitional Authority in this regard is crucial.

Counter-narcotics is another important area. The European Union welcomes the recent seizures by the Afghan Special Narcotics Force and urges the Afghan Government and the international community to work together to tackle the problem, which affects almost every area of Afghanistan's development and security.

Afghanistan has made enormous progress in the past years. Many challenges remain to be overcome, and, although several of those may seem daunting, the European Union believes that the people of Afghanistan have the courage and the determination to overcome them. Continued international engagement and support is also crucial, and the European Union will remain committed to a secure, stable, free, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kataoka (Japan): Mr. President, at the outset let me join previous speakers in offering sincere and heartfelt condolences to the Russian people and, in particular, to the families of the victims of the tragic accidents which occurred yesterday.

With the approach of the presidential election in October and the parliamentary elections next year, the Bonn process is reaching its final stage. The rebirth of Afghanistan as a democratic State is at stake in those elections. I would therefore like to welcome the President's initiative to organize this meeting in order to provide the Security Council and the United Nations membership as a whole with an opportunity to reconfirm their commitment to Afghanistan at this very critical moment in the process.

I should like to comment on three points which I consider important for the success of the process. The first relates to the elections. The registration of more than 10 million voters — 41.4 per cent of whom are women — clearly demonstrates the strong determination of the Afghan people to create a new

nation through the democratic process. We certainly welcome that sign of progress.

We also appreciate the fact that many presidential candidates in appointing their vice-presidential candidates, are giving due weight to achieving ethnic balance with an eye to promoting ethnic reconciliation. We pay tribute to the Joint Electoral Management Body and all others concerned for their efforts to date to prepare for those elections. We are delighted at the signing of memorandums of understanding with Pakistan and Iran with regard to out-of-country registration and voting, and we request the further cooperation of these countries for the successful conduct of voting in their respective territories. In order to facilitate the successful holding of elections, Japan, for its part, will continue its support and assistance.

Secondly, it goes without saying that free and fair elections require that the security of voters be guaranteed. In that connection, we are much concerned over the security situation in Afghanistan, which has deteriorated since last year as a result of the subversive activities of residual Taliban and Al Qaeda elements, clashes between warlords and the narcotics trade. Now, the security of aid workers and people engaged in electoral preparations is gravely threatened. The unstable security conditions in the south and south-east in fact cause delays in the voter registration process, which demonstrates the continued determination of extremist groups to impede the electoral process.

Japan strongly condemns the activities of such groups, but at the same time is much encouraged but the decision of NATO to send additional troops to Afghanistan. We look forward to the improvement of the security situation with the rapid deployment of those forces.

Thirdly, with respect to the DDR process, despite the efforts of the Afghan Government and the assistance of the international community, the number of soldiers who have entered the DDR programme so far remains at only 20 per cent of the total target for the programme, a situation which is far from satisfactory. Modification of that target number and of the timetable for DDR is currently under consideration, based on the decision to organize the presidential and parliamentary elections separately and on experience with the programme up to this point.

Japan, as the leading country in the DDR process, together with the United Nations, continues to make efforts to support direct negotiations between leaders of the transitional Government and regional commanders, implement the commander-incentive programmes and promote the reintegration programmes so that momentum for DDR can be maintained even after the presidential election.

All parties concerned must realize that they will never be permitted to achieve their objectives by force. They must abide by law and due process. In that regard, we welcome the decision taken in July by President Karzai to declare the following to be illegal: rearmament after DDR; the remobilization of discharged soldiers; maintaining armed militias; and the possession of heavy weapons outside the framework of the Ministry of Defence and the new National Army.

It is also essential that the international community continue to be united in its determination not to create a power vacuum after DDR. To that end, it must accelerate the formation of the National Army and police force and the deployment of the international forces.

For the United Nations and for the international community as a whole Afghanistan is a major touchstone to demonstrate what we can do for countries in need of assistance in the nation-building process in the aftermath of conflict. The Bonn process is still fragile and the security situation remains precarious, but with the support of the international community and, above all, the strong determination of the Afghan people, we have now reached the stage of organizing presidential elections. We remain strongly committed to the national reconstruction of Afghanistan and are confident that the upcoming elections will serve as a first step towards an enduring and positive cooperative relationship between Afghanistan and the rest of the international community.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The next speaker is the representative of Canada. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rock (Canada): To begin with, Mr. President, Canada wishes to add its voice to those of the many colleagues who have expressed sincere sympathy, particularly to the families and friends of

those who perished in the tragedy that befell Russia and its people yesterday.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada is grateful for the opportunity to address the Council on this important issue. We would like to thank Mr. Arnault for providing us with such a candid snapshot of the situation on the ground. The United Nations presence in Kabul provides an invaluable coordinating mechanism and a meaningful contribution to Afghanistan's rehabilitation, including through institution-building.

We agree with the conclusion of the report of the Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan: in order for the "peace process to move forward, extremism, factionalism and the illicit drug trade must be addressed resolutely" (*S/2004/634, summary*). The report highlights the fact that we are at a crucial stage in the pursuit of the goals agreed to in Bonn: national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights.

(*spoke in English*)

For our part, Canada's commitment remains steadfast. We have been with Afghanistan since the beginning on the path to security and prosperity. In fact, for the past six months, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been under the capable command of Canadian General Hillier, which was so generously acknowledged by my colleague from Afghanistan. We have maintained 2,000 troops in Afghanistan until recently with the transfer of the ISAF command. Following the drawdown of our current troop contribution, Canada will sustain the presence of approximately 700 troops in ISAF. But of course, our engagement goes beyond military deployments and involves complementary commitments in the areas of diplomacy and development.

We know that, in order to bring about sustainable change, more must be done. For that reason, Canada has committed an additional $250 million in development assistance to Afghanistan for the period through 2009, bringing our total commitment to more than $600 million since 2001.

Indeed, Afghanistan, with the help of the international community, has made giant strides: a new constitution, strengthening institutions, massive voter registration, continuing verification of political rights and steady progress in disarmament and heavy weapons cantonment.

However, the gains that have been made are not yet irreversible. Without security and credible, accountable governance institutions in Afghanistan — without a growing private sector and national income — the goal of becoming a democratic and self-sustaining State will remain elusive.

Our efforts are being threatened by the mutually reinforcing threats posed by warlords, resurgent Taliban and their supporters, and narcotics. That is a volatile mix. Both supported and insulated by lucrative customs revenues and the profits from the narcotics trade, many warlords are capable of autonomous action and are often impervious to standard incentives in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). It is clear that these circumstances represent the single greatest obstacle to stability and progress in Afghanistan and that, if allowed to continue, they threaten to undo the progress made over nearly three years. That has happened before and it can happen again.

The Afghan authorities and the international community must make it clear that this behaviour is unacceptable. We must deny support and legitimacy to those who choose to pursue their own parochial interests ahead of the interests of Afghanistan. We must also be prepared to support sanctions against those who remain non-compliant with national priority reforms, such as DDR and heavy-weapons cantonment. That, of course, will require resolute action to renew the authority of Government institutions in the eyes of the populace, as well as to disarm and decommission those militias that have been pursuing political ends by shows of force. The international community must now consider how best to continue to support Afghanistan in this effort in the coming months.

In the immediate term, our paramount goal is to ensure that the presidential and subsequent parliamentary elections go smoothly: as freely and as fairly as possible. The upcoming elections mark a milestone on the road to establishing a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative Government. As the report of the Secretary-General confirms, while voter registration figures are positive, additional attention must be devoted to under-represented regions, including certain areas to the south, as well as to out-of-country voters.

We strongly support the verification of political rights now under way by the joint effort of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. We — neighbours and partners of Afghanistan alike — must also all rededicate ourselves to prevent any and all acts of violence aimed at disrupting the electoral process in Afghanistan: all such acts run dramatically contrary to the aspirations of the Afghan people themselves, which have now been clearly expressed.

Elections are the final phase contemplated by the Bonn Agreement. After the elections it will be incumbent on the Government of Afghanistan and on the international community to develop a forward-looking plan that extends the vision of Bonn: setting new benchmarks, key to democratic development. But without security, particularly outside Kabul, the prospects for successful elections and overall stabilization remain seriously endangered.

It is time to intensify our focus on key areas of concern to ensure that they do not put our overall engagement in jeopardy. Those key areas include warlords, militias, narcotics and insurgents. With continuing support from the international community, Afghanistan's new Government, army, police and security institutions are showing that they are equal to these tasks. But there is still a long way to go. The international community can reinforce their effectiveness by ensuring that the development agenda and the security sector reform agenda in Afghanistan move forward hand in hand. Enduring success will require a professional and reformist Government backed by sustained commitments to shared development objectives. Canada will continue, working in cooperation with Afghan and international partners, particularly the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to develop creative and credible solutions.

We are particularly grateful to be able to participate today in this helpful discussion on the way forward.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Canada for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Iceland, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): I would like at the outset to join other colleagues who have expressed their condolences to you, your Government and the Russian people over the tragic loss of life in the two aeroplane tragedies yesterday.

Iceland, as a member of the European Economic Area, fully aligns itself with the statement made by my colleague Ambassador van den Berg on behalf of the European Union a few minutes ago. Let me, however, emphasize briefly a few points.

First of all, we would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his frank and informative report (S/2004/634) on the situation in Afghanistan and to the Special Representative for his briefing this morning. It is clear from the report that the situation gives cause for considerable concern. A central concern is the security situation, both short-term and long-term.

In the short term it is essential that the provincial reconstruction teams be reinforced and that a secure environment be established in which peace-building can progress. I would like, on behalf of my Government, to take this opportunity to deplore the increasingly frequent attacks on United Nations and non-governmental organization (NGO) staff in recent weeks, and to express regret — though at the same time understanding — at the withdrawal of Medecins sans frontières, one of the most courageous of the NGOs, with more than 20 years of experience in the country.

Iceland is committed to making its contribution to establishing peace in Afghanistan. Icelandic Foreign Minister Halldór Asgrimsson travelled to Kabul this June to be present at the handover of the management of Kabul airport on 1 June to an Icelandic team. The operating of the airport is key to the successful operation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), commanded by NATO, and Iceland is strongly committed to that project. I am proud to say that the airport is being run successfully on a 24/7 basis, although I should say that this is despite a far from fully manned team.

The long-term human security environment is crucially effected not only by the activities of extremist elements, such as the Taliban and Al Qaeda, but also by the flourishing of criminality, funded principally by the narcotics trade. That illicit trade has three aspects: production capacity, trade routes and users. We must

address all aspects if we are to defeat this corrosive threat to the long-term stability of the country. Production capacity can be effectively reduced in the long term only through providing farmers with viable alternatives. Part of the equation which has the potential to make drug production less economically attractive is the fluidity of trade routes. Putting the screws on the trade routes would surely help. And of course the demand end of this dirty business needs to be addressed more effectively.

Another crucial factor in establishing long-term security is successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). It is my impression that the most difficult of the three related processes, that is reintegration, is also in some ways the most important. Soldiers who hand in guns must be given constructive and meaningful roles in society, or the danger is that they will simply acquire new guns, of which there is a plentiful supply.

The Secretary-General's report makes it clear that there are no easy answers. However, there are brighter aspects, as we have heard this morning from Mr. Jean Arnault. We would like to commend all those who have worked so hard on voter registration. The successful registration of more than 10 million voters, 41 per cent of them women, is truly remarkable.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Uzbekistan, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, may I extend to you and, through you, to the Government of Russia and to the Russian people our sincerest condolences in connection with the deaths caused by yesterday's tragic air crashes in Russia.

Turning to the items on today's agenda, I would like to express gratitude to you once again, Sir, for bringing this item up for discussion in the Security Council and for enabling us to speak here. I would like, first of all, to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his thorough briefing on the current situation in Afghanistan.

We welcome the progress achieved in implementing the outcomes of the Berlin conference with respect to achieving effective State administration, establishing such components as an army, law enforcement agencies and a justice system, furthering social and economic development, and continuing the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme.

The positive processes currently under way in Afghanistan not only make it possible for the peaceful rehabilitation of the country, but also open up prospects for its participation, inter alia, in integration processes in Central Asia. However, although there have been initial successes in rebuilding the State of Afghanistan, the difficulties that have arisen in organizing general elections are a cause for concern. These relate to the worsening security situation, increasing narcotics production, and the slow implementation of agreements entered into by the Afghan Government and the international community within the framework of the Berlin conference, relating to political, social and economic reform and the provision of financial and other types of assistance.

We believe it is important to point out that the conclusions in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/634) pertaining to ensuring security and stability in the country are in consonance with the consistent position of Uzbekistan that the international community's main efforts should be directed at continuing to combat terrorism, extremism and the illegal drug trade, and at enhancing the authority and capabilities of the central Government of Afghanistan. In that connection, we have no doubt that the United Nations must play a coordinating role.

Allow me to refer to the following elements of Uzbekistan's vision for continuing the peace process in Afghanistan.

The first element involves efforts to disarm military-political factions. We must speed up the process for relinquishing arms and expand activities for the reintegration of demobilized soldiers and officers into the national economy. We must create a regulated and well-provisioned law enforcement agency and, above all, a unified national army subject to the central authority.

The second element is the subordination of political authority in the regions of Afghanistan to the central Government. We cannot fail to express concern at the worsening security situation in regions that previously were relatively calm.

The third element is to strengthen the international community's campaign to eliminate

terrorism, extremism and illegal drug trafficking. We express our concern at the increasing number of raids carried out by subversive forces and bandit terrorist elements within the country with the aim of preventing the stabilization of Afghanistan and the holding of general elections. We see internal and external forces at work in those activities. In that context, we believe it is important to draw the Security Council's most serious attention to the threats posed by radical and extremist religious organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and urge the Council to impose the most robust sanctions against terrorist organizations.

The fourth element is consistent implementation of the decisions of the Tokyo and the Berlin conferences, including the pledges for financial assistance to Afghanistan.

Fifthly, neighbouring and other States should refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

We are seriously concerned at the record harvest and processing of opium poppies in Afghanistan. In order to prevent a scenario in which drugs ultimately undermine the country's economy, we need to speed up implementation of far-reaching structural reforms of the Afghan economy, thus ensuring employment for its people, above all, for its volunteer army. In addition, given that drug trafficking needs to be countered in the Central Asian region, we are counting on increased support from the international community to establish a Central Asian regional information coordination centre to combat trans-border crime linked to illegal drug trafficking.

Normalizing the situation in Afghanistan, including in the social and economic areas, will ensure not only the security and well-being of Afghanistan but also regional and international stability. In that context, Uzbekistan considers Afghanistan to be an integral part of the Central Asian space and encourages its participation in processes for regional integration.

I would like to draw attention to the importance of using the resources of neighbouring countries to effectively support the reconstruction of Afghanistan's economic infrastructure. Uzbekistan is assisting the Afghan people in rebuilding and restoring communication infrastructure, roads, bridges and railroads and electricity infrastructure in order to create more favourable conditions for the transit of deliveries sent to Afghanistan. The Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, together with the relevant United Nations agencies, has established a mechanism to coordinate the flow of deliveries from international organizations and donor countries. More than 2.5 million tons of goods have been delivered to Afghanistan by way of the Termez-Jeyretan bridge. Uzbekistan has taken measures to lower the cost of transporting goods and improve its infrastructure.

We are still far from restoring complete peace and stability in Afghanistan. However, we have every reason to believe that after what we have gone through together, the international community cannot allow the positive process for the peaceful rebuilding of Afghanistan to be turned back. I am certain that the conclusions of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan will be taken into account by the international community and will serve to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to rebuild Afghanistan under the coordination of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In my national capacity, I would like to thank once again all those who have spoken for their expression of sympathy.

I now resume my function as President and give the floor to Mr. Jean Arnault in order to respond to comments and questions.

Mr. Arnault: I would most like, perhaps, to clarify the situation with respect to the troop strength of the Afghan military forces. As has happened in many post-conflict situations, the issue of the strength of military forces is always — or most of the time — the subject of much debate. Afghanistan was no exception.

Last year, the figure initially provided by the Ministry of Defence for the total number of troops under the Ministry of Defence was approximately 700,000. After some discussion and absent any credible, verified statistics, agreement was reached in November on the working assumption of approximately 100,000 soldiers and officers for the purpose of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. Since then — and that is since October of last year — as the United Nations and other organizations got involved in the DDR process in quite some detail, it appeared very clearly that in fact the troop strength of the nine corps had been vastly overstated. In several cases, when 2,000, 3,000 or 4,000 soldiers were supposed to belong to a corps, it

would turn out that a maximum of 200, 300 or 400 were actually employed. That is why it is now a working assumption of the DDR process that we are talking about no more than 40,000 to 50,000 actual troops under the umbrella of the Ministry of Defence. That figure might change somewhat, but we feel fairly confident that as the DDR process progresses, we will find out in fact that the numbers are smaller rather than larger.

Allow me to reassure the Ambassador of Pakistan and the members of the Council that there is no room for political bias at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). As a matter of fact, with regard to the overall analysis of the situation, to a very large extent we share the analysis presented by the Ambassador of Pakistan, in particular his analysis with regard to the role of factionalism in the situation of insecurity. Not only do we share that analysis, but as the Council may know, much of our mandate is directed at the need to control and contain factionalism through the DDR process, the verification of human rights and political rights and, most of all, of course, through the organization of a free and fair election in Afghanistan, the ultimate purpose of which is to create a post-war order based on popular will, not on the precarious balance of military forces that was established in the wake of the collapse of the Taliban regime.

However, our contention is that today, Taliban activities are directly undermining the expression of popular will and, paradoxically, they are doing so precisely in the communities they claim to support and which we want to empower. We do not dispute in any way that the Taliban has assets and resources in the country itself, even though the outcome of the registration process and the interest and the passion for registration shown by communities in the south, south-east and east demonstrate in fact how isolated those extremist forces currently are.

Among the tools that the extremist forces have at their disposal are cross-border operations and infiltration, which have been used to attack the peace process and, more specifically, to attack the electoral process. As UNAMA, we would be irresponsible if we did not appeal to the international community, to the Government of Pakistan and to the Government of Afghanistan and its national forces to put an end to that situation, particularly on the southern border. With the support of the Security Council, we will continue to do so.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Arnault for those clarifications.

Do any other delegations wish to make comments?

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I would like to thank Mr. Arnault for his concluding remarks, which, in our view, put in balance the situation that exists in Afghanistan today. We agree that there is an effort on the part of the extremists to disrupt the elections; obviously, there are various reasons for that. There is no question that the extremists do not as yet enjoy popular support in Afghanistan, including in the south or the south-east of the country.

However, we would like to make one point. In our view, it is not primarily cross-border infiltration that is resulting in the extremist violence in Afghanistan, including in the south and the south-east. If one were to review the location of the 30 or 35 incidents directed against election workers over the past two months or so, I think one would be able to pinpoint that, apart from four, five or six incidents, most of them have taken place well inside Afghan territory, at least 100 miles from the border with Pakistan. The five or six incidents in the border regions — at least those reported — have been in places such as Nangarhar and Zabul, close to Pakistan's borders.

When you request or seek cooperation from Pakistan to enhance its actions to stop infiltration, two questions arise.

First, I believe that what we are doing is extraordinary. The effort we have deployed, with the political costs that Pakistan has incurred by marching its troops into territories where even our British friends did not venture for 150 years, is, I think, remarkable. We have gone in and dealt with the tribes; we have gone in with peace, with construction, with schools and hospitals, in order to win those tribes over to our way of thinking. But we have encountered resistance, as members are aware, and our operations are under way; many of our soldiers have died. The question is, what more does the United Nations expect us to do? When that call is made upon us, what more is expected from Pakistan in this context that we are not already doing? That is the question.

We feel very strongly that we are doing everything we can. We have taken many political risks and have suffered many military casualties, and to call upon Pakistan to do even more is unfair. We can become more effective in our actions, but that requires a building up of our technical and other capacities. I believe that our friends at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and our allies are well aware of what those requirements are. We have not received those requirements, despite repeated requests. That adds to our sense of frustration when we are asked to do more.

Secondly, cross-border action is not only the responsibility of Pakistan; even more, it is the responsibility of Afghanistan and of the international forces that are in Afghanistan. Pakistan has deployed 75,000 troops on the border. We would like to know what the number on the other side is. Is it larger? Have the actions taken on the other side of the border been more extensive than those enumerated with regard to what Pakistan has done on our side of the border? Are they more of a commitment? The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has agreed to enhance its forces by a few thousand. Is that the response that is required from the international community? And, if the international community asks us to do more, should it not do more itself? If the United Nations asks us to do more, should it not ask ISAF at least to match our efforts on the other side of the border?

Those are real and practical issues. Therefore, I must say that my Government is very sensitive to any assertion that we could do more than we are doing without the help of the international community.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no further speakers.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.